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Report – Inauguration
of
"India Study Centre"

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The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) inaugurated its India Study Centre (ISC) on February 7, 2020 at its premises. Former Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sohail Aman was the Chief Guest at the occasion. Other speakers at the inauguration included: Dr. Mujeeb Afzal, Associate Professor Quaid-e-Azam University, and Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, Director General South Asia and SAARC at Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Introducing the India Study Centre, its Director Dr. Saif Malik said that this was the first ever research-based initiative by ISSI focusing exclusively on India and Indian policies specifically affecting Pakistan. He said that Pakistan cannot stay oblivious of the happening across the border, especially in the context of lethal Indian atrocities against the Kashmiris coupled with latest development in the context of Citizen Amendment Act. These developments in India need thematic sessions, in-depth study and analysis to propose policy options for Pakistan and the challenges emanating from India, particularly with regard to the rise of Hindu nationalism, promotion of Hindutva ideology and its impact on minorities in India, especially Muslims. Elaborating on the aims of India Study Centre (ISC), Dr. Malik said that the Centre will conduct focused **research** and **analytical studies** on multi-dimensional aspects of India, and promote **policy discourse** on India's **foreign**, **security** and **socio-economic** policies along with implications for Pakistan and the region as well as India-Pakistan relations.

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, in his welcome remarks extended a warm welcome to the Chief Guest, speakers and all distinguished guests. The Institute, he said, has three streams of work.

One is research which is its primary field of activity. ISSI has been producing peer reviewed quarterly journal that has been published since 1977. The Institute also produces topical Issue Briefs almost on a weekly basis which focus on current affairs and issues of global concern. The Institute has an in-house team of 24 researchers, where its focuses on a lot of quality work and brainstorming sessions to refine ideas and research methodology, with zero tolerance for plagiarism. The research work produced by ISSI is meeting all HEC criteria and a year-long effort will hopefully result in the up-gradation of the category of its journal by HEC. Moreover, ISSI research articles are internationally indexed with leading journals and data bases so that Pakistan's narrative and research findings are available for a wider global audience.

The second stream of activity involves dialogue and holding different forms of interactive events. It is not the quantity that ISSI aspire, but the synergy between research and the dialogue that generates over those issues and areas of concern that matters for Pakistan. Also, now ISSI is doing events in a manner that they become building blocks. For example, ISSI did a series of events on energy issues from Pakistan's perspective, one from a practitioner and another from climate change perspective. The purpose remains to create synergy and explore various dimensions to core issues, so that whatever recommendations come forward are of value to the relevant stakeholders and government.

The third stream of activity at ISSI is to provide policy input on topics that are agitating the government and key stakeholders. In this regard, the Institute also holds a series of Tuesday Dialogues under Chatham House rules which involve key stakeholders. These inputs are then weaved into Confidential Briefs. The Institute maintains a close liaison with MOFA, not only as they are its patrons, but also seek their guidance and support in selecting topics which demand critical, dedicated research that could feed into an evidence-based policy formation process. In this regard, the Institute is privileged to be on the Advisory Council being formed by the Foreign Minister.

The vision behind creating Centres at ISSI is to produce high quality dedicated research work which is relevant to our policy makers, but also, is read internationally. Hence, the focus is quality and linkages with databases. The methodology to achieving these objectives is to utilise our existing resource and to achieve more with less. ISSI is making a conscious effort to optimally use its existing resource in these Centres. Two Centre have already been established. One is called China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC), and the second Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC).

The third Centre that is being inaugurated today is the India Study Centre (ISC). Ambassador Chaudhry said that there was a philosophy in establishing this Centre through a practical experience he witnessed at SAARC meetings where the smaller states used to band together to challenge the dominance of India. However, in that process we were not really focussing enough on India. If you go to Jewaharlal Nehru University, you will find more PhDs on Pakistan than you can find people doing PhD on India in Pakistan. So there is enough to study on India.

Kashmir would be one of the core themes that ISC would be focusing on. Kashmir presents a modern foreign policy challenge to Pakistan. Home grown terrorism in India and rights of the minorities would be another theme along with dynamics of key states within India because India is not a federation. The Centre would also be looking at the military machine India has built up. Along with these, the Centre would also focus on the economy and foreign policy of India with major powers and its neighbours.

Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri in his remarks complemented the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad for this extremely valuable and timely initiative. The Centre, he said, will become a premier research base and a great resource for all those who need to better understand India. He said that the relationship between India and Pakistan is not only one of the most important, but also the most difficult one. For the past 72 years, it has remained at the heart of our foreign policy discourse. Therefore, there has always been a need in the academic and the policy circles to understand India, but this need has never been more acute than it is today.

The Indian social, economic and political landscape is undergoing a sea change under the current leadership. The India of today is different from the one known to most. New research is therefore needed to understand the new mindset, the new ideology, the new strategic thinking and the new approach.

We have been hearing that India is on the move. The journeys from incredible India to intolerant India; from the largest democracy to the largest theocracy; from secularism to Hindu Rastra are all palpable. India is indeed on the move, but this move is causing a lot of pain and anxiety in the civilized world. There is in fact a need to reassess the whole Indian construct. India has itself thrown in its own narrative about the partition of the Sub-Continent and the two-nation theory.

Neither the pace nor the direction of India's shift is rational. So there is no way for Pakistan or any other rational country to engage with India. But unfortunately, Pakistan does not have the luxury to disengage itself from India and overlook its regression. He said that the Centre will find it useful to study the Indian propaganda machine to better understand as to how the perpetrator of state terrorism has been presenting itself as the victim of terrorism. It will also be useful to study as to how India has misled the international community for so long on the issue of

state or non-state actors while using its serving officers such as Commander Kulbhushan Jadhev for terrorist activities in other countries.

The Centre will also find it helpful to decode Hindutva mindset and study the Chanakya doctrine to understand the fascist mindset that is at the heart of RSS-BJP regime. The Centre's research might be helpful in making the world understand as to why Indian state-sponsored Saffron terrorism is more dangerous than any other form of terrorism, and why the extremist Hindutva ideology is more harmful than any other form of extremism. Understanding the Hindutva ideology will lay bare the Indian hegemonic designs that are not only a threat to regional security but are also a risk to global peace. The Centre, he said, will also be able to focus on the situation in Indian Occupied Kashmir and the illegality of Indian actions of August 5.

Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said that the South Asia Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indeed looks forward to benefitting from the quality research the Centre will be doing on these and other issues. He concluded on the hope that the Centre will be able to establish close linkages with other academic institutions and think tanks not only in Pakistan, but globally for joint research and mutually beneficial exchange of ideas.

Congratulating ISSI, Dr. Mujeeb Afzal said that ISC is a breath of fresh air. The dynamics of India are completely different from the region. So in order to make an assessment of India, we need to have an understanding of what is taking place in India. In a world where number of things are not in the right proportion, correct data of Indian economy, society and politics is required. Traditionally, we have relied on data collected outside Pakistan. To study the rise of economic power, evolving new alliances and the competition between Hindus in India needs to be studied. A collection of indigenously collected data on India would not only help in conducting effective research, but would also go out a long way.

Air Marshal Sohail Aman in his remarks, stated that ISSI has a huge task at their hands as the Centre encompasses a lot more than what has been said before me. The Centre will have to get into almost every policy domain starting from economics, political, foreign policy, social to cultural aspect of India. He said that the policy makers in reality actually do not have the time to read and research. However, they are in an illusion that they know everything. This unfortunately, is not true and happens all across the globe. The linkage with academic research is

crucial for policy makers. This is when centres like ISC need to stand up and fill the gap for policy makers.

Sharing his experience studying at John Hopkins, he said that we were asked to restrict our policy documents to a brief one pager, and that too written in a way that even a grade-10 student can understand it. In those days, for us it was extremely hard to understand, but now, it makes perfect sense. Conceptual clarity allows you to narrow down the policy options to a single page.

Talking about the unipolar world, Air Marshal Aman said that fifty years down the line when historians will start to write about what happened in the unipolar world, they will write about how things went out of control across the world and unipolarity actually pushed the world into chaos. As a result, new power centres started to emerge like China and Russia. The Hindu mindset too, is also drawing lineage from this and this is also a rationale behind Hindutva.

There is also a very important co-relationship that needs to be understood between the Jews and Nazi's and Hindus and Hindutva. Due to certain reasons, the Americans had to step in and created what we call Israel today. From 1920s, based on the same rationale, RSS is now challenging not just the region but the world, as RSS is now in command of India and pursuing a Hindu ideology of hate and separatism. They think that as a democratic force, you can go and push Hindutva as a strategy in going anywhere and taking action. However, the ability of current leadership in India is actually converting the challenges faced by Pakistan into opportunities. The leadership has clearly exposed the fault lines in India. He said that it was his firm belief that the mindset in India is nothing to be worried about in Pakistan.

Indians got their answers in the engagement with Pakistan last year and have realized that they cannot out power or outsmart Pakistan. However, as a result, the situation for Hybrid Warfare is ripe. Hybrid strategy, he recommended, is something that ISC must focus on. Wars may not take place in the large scale domain, but then there are real time opportunities and strategies that might be exercised to ensure that the other country is taken care off. Pakistan is a peaceful country, but we are facing a war mongering adversary who wishes to annex Kashmir by abrogating its own constitution and against International Law. The mentality of India needs to be understood. The ground for Hybrid strategy is prepared and that is what ISC needs to exploit.

PICTURES OF THE EVENT

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